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ABSTRACT

Ways to promote academic advising are suggested at a conference for deans and directors. Objectives that an institution should address are as follows: (1) to provide advisers with accurate and timely information about the policies, procedures, and processes that affect the advising relationship; (2) to provide advisers with additional skills often required in their advising responsibilities; (3) to increase student satisfaction with advising; (4) to increase adviser satisfaction with advising; and (5) to develop a comprehensive approach to academic planning as a part of the total advising process. The importance of assessing the commitment of the institution to the advising process is noted. In order to achieve the objectives, attention must be directed to selection and training of faculty advisers, evaluation of advisers, and compensation or reward. Advising and student development can be conceptualized by levels and stages. The primary level involves information-giving about registration, graduation, and courses, while the professional level concerns more advanced areas, such as selection of majors or graduate schools. The next level involves the adviser's personal skills in recognizing student problems and making referrals. Stages of the advising process begin with the student's first contact. (SW)

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Deans & Directors of Resident Instruction in Agriculture

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1978 Summer Work Conference

VITAL RESOURCES: STUDENTS AND DOLLARS

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Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
July 19-21, 1978

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges

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MAXIMIZING THE USE OF FACULTY ADVISORS

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I am pleased to have been invited to make this presentation to an audience of Deans and Directors, since you are the ones in the positions where some hard decisions may have to be made about the kinds of things I will mention. I am also pleased to be presenting my thoughts about academic advising in higher education immediately following Dr. Harding's remarks on retention, since I truly feel that the advising process can play an important role in both recruitment and retention, as implied in your Conference Theme--Vital Resources: Students and Dollars. What I'd like to do this morning is provide some ideas as to how another vital campus resource--the faculty--can contribute to the recruitment and retention of students and to the best possible use of available academic dollars through this process of academic advising.

Let me admit at the outset that my suggestions are not panaceas, nor are they necessarily easy to accomplish. They are, however, achievable, adaptable, in some cases proven, and they are possible with minimal additional costs. The key element is commitment, which I'll discuss in more detail later.

But first, why should we "maximize the use of faculty advisors?" Can't students read the College catalog as well--and in some cases better--than the faculty advisors? Can't someone else sign Pre-Registration forms, Registration forms, and if your students display typical student behavior, Re-Registration (or Drop/Add) forms? Can't the computer tell the student what he/she needs to graduate? Can't the College Placement Office tell students there are no jobs available when they do graduate? The answer to all of these questions is "Yes." Why then, should we use faculty advisors at all?

Well, if you believe in longitudinal research, you may recall from Feldman and Newcomb's 1969 studies on The Impact of College on Students that "the faculty...is clearly seen by individual students to be of more influence than their fellow students on their intellectual development and on their occupational and career decisions."[1] Or more recently, Alexander

[1]Kenneth A. Feldman and Theodore M. Newcomb, The Impact of College on Students (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), p. 258.

Astin found and states in his 1977 book entitled Four Critical Years that

> "student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other involvement variable or, indeed any other student or institutional characteristic. Students who interact frequently with faculty are more satisfied with all aspects of their institutional experience, including student friendships, variety of courses, intellectual environment, and even administration of the institution. Finding ways to encourage greater personal contact between faculty and students might increase students' satisfaction with their college experiences."[2]

What better way to encourage student-faculty interaction than through the process of academic advising, which occurs regularly throughout each academic year? What must be remembered here is that mere contact is not enough--the interaction must be meaningful and productive for both the student and the advisor. What I'd like to do now is show you some ways how you can "maximize the use of faculty advisors."

Before one can implement the very direct, specific, tangible ways of utilizing faculty advisors "to their fullest potential," as we say we develop our students, some basic philosophic understandings are necessary. First of all, the institution (or College, School, etc.) must know what its faculty advising program is supposed to be accomplishing. In order to understand this I think two elements are needed: a definition of academic advising and a clear set of objectives. Now I will be the first to admit that if we went around this room and asked for your definition of advising, we'd come up with a wide variety of responses. In fact, I find it so difficult myself that I won't even attempt to define it--mostly because I think the concept is too comprehensive to write a Webster-type definition (Brittanica maybe). Perhaps it is easier to specify what advising is not, and I will borrow some thoughts from my close colleague and friend, Dr. Joe Metz of the University of Maryland. He says that advising is not a "fringe benefit" or minor support service only tangentially related to the real purposes of the institution. It is not something that anyone or everyone should or can do. It is not telling the advisee what to schedule, what to choose, or what to do. It is not focused exclusively on the student's

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[2]Alexander W. Astin, Four Critical Years (Washington, D.C.: Jossey-Bass, 1977), p.223.

intra-institutional experience. And it is not imposed or required.[3] In the absence of a specific definition I think that the essence of any definition might be contained in the second element--objectives.

I am constantly reminded of the title of the Cohen article I use in the 2nd or 3rd meeting of my General Methods of Teaching classes--"If You're Not Sure Where You're Going, You're Liable to End Up Someplace Else."[4] Well, that reminder is enough to keep my thoughts and efforts directed toward a common set of objectives I'd like to share with you now. I find that these objectives are almost universally applicable, whether you are reviewing an entire advising program or some smaller part of it--like the ones I will outline in a few minutes. The objectives I try to work by are as follows:

1. To provide advisors with accurate and timely information about the policies, procedures, and processes which affect the advising relationship. My dissertation results showed a significant difference in student ratings of advisors who were knowledgeable about the academic rules and regulations of the institution. In some cases this could be the sole criterion for success in an advising program.

2. To provide advisors with additional skills often required in their advising responsibilities. The ability to quote the College catalog is not enough. An advisor must be able to communicate with a variety of students under a variety of circumstances. I will elaborate on these in a bit.

3. To increase student satisfaction with advising. This objective could bolster the recruitment and retention efforts at your institution. How many students have come to your offices because of dissatisfaction with the advice they'd been given? How many of those have left your offices feeling a little better because you gave them good advice? And how many decided to stay at your institution or told their family and friends about the good advising experience they had with you?

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[3]David S. Crockett, Academic Advising: A Resource Document (Iowa City, Iowa: The American College Testing Program, 1978), pp. 1.20-1.21.

[4]Ed Cohen, "If You're Not Sure Where You're Going, You're Liable to End Up Someplace Else," Media and Methods, March 1970, pp. 39-41+.

Shouldn't we want all students to feel that way no matter what faculty advisor they see?

4. To increase advisor satisfaction with advising. How many times have you felt good yourself when you know a student left your office knowing more about himself/herself, about courses, grades, requirements, and others? Yes, it should be fun for the advisor, too. There are some problems and risks in achieving this, however, which I will mention in a minute.

5. And finally, to develop a comprehensive approach to academic planning as a part of the total advising process. This implies more than mere course scheduling and fulfilling requirements, and I'll explain what I mean in the next portion of my remarks.

Although I don't consider it an objective per se, there is one additional task that must be undertaken in order to "maximize the use of faculty advisors," that is, to conduct an analysis of the commitment your institution has to the advising process. How does the President feel about advising on your campus? Does the Faculty Senate view advising as an important function? Is this responsibility articulated in faculty contracts, mission statements, College catalogs, and collective bargaining agreements? In many cases written support is there, but has not been utilized. Where this doesn't exist, your first task is to create it. Another sign of commitment that I look for when consulting with various institutions about their advising programs is who has responsibility for advising in your academic unit. If advising is one of the 114 things that the Dean has responsibility for, then I'd say the commitment is minimal. Someone has to be available, almost full-time, to really strengthen one's advising program. Associates, Assistants, Assistants to, or even a faculty member might be charged with this primary responsibility. With this kind of commitment and the right kind of person in that role, little else is needed to provide a good advising program; that person will make it work. I can speak from my own six years of experience as that person in the College of Education at the University of Maryland.

Now I'd like to turn to four aspects of faculty advising that I feel must be considered in order to achieve the above objectives. Be sure to keep in mind what I said earlier about the tasks not being easy and some hard decisions to be made. These aspects are:

1. Selection of faculty advisors--one of the first realizations we must admit is that not all faculty should be advisors. Some are not interested, some are not prepared, and some are just no good at it. Why, then, do so many of us still require all faculty members to

be advisors? Well, mostly because that's the way it's always been. With all the pseudo-innovations in higher education this is one area in which experiments (or risks) sorely lack. It seems to me only good common sense to utilize faculty resources where they are most effective and productive. This means some trade-offs between advising responsibilities and other faculty responsibilities, and I'll be more specific as to these when I discuss the fourth aspect. When a commitment to a selection process is made, then some criteria used in the selection might include one's knowledge of institutional rules, policies and procedures affecting the advising relationship, good interpersonal skills, and a willingness to improve. I would suggest that new faculty not be selected as advisors until they have an opportunity to understand better the institutional environment in which they must function. For most of you in research institutions I might even go so far as to suggest that those faculty nearing the tenure crisis not be selected as advisors because their livelihood will not depend on how well they advise their students. Some of the practical problems involved with such selection I will also address in the fourth aspect.

2. Training of faculty advisors--another aspect which is lacking in commitment. For most of our faculty advisors their training for this responsibility has been on-the-job. A new faculty member appears on the starting date for his/her contract, is handed a College catalog and a stack of student folders, and is now an advisor. So far he/she doesn't even know where the rest room is, but is expected to answer questions about dropping courses, adding courses, requirements, registration, graduation, and maybe even where the rest room is.

   Well, assuming that one has made some selection of advisors, I'd like to outline a series of training modules for faculty advisors that I have developed. These are presented in an hierarchical order of their use on the campus, utilize personnel from around the campus, and contain the following elements:

   a. Basic Information Skills--this is a thorough and accurate knowledge of academic rules, regulations, policies and procedures; it includes General Education requirements, course availability, individual program/major/minor requirements, registration procedures and processes, retention policies, and the rationale for all of these. This latter understanding is often important. Nothing can destroy an advising program more than the advisor agreeing with the student's complaints about requirements or

procedures when he/she doesn't even know why they exist. That is the reason I always include representatives from the Registrar's, Admission and Computer Center Offices when I conduct this module. This effort is in accordance with the first objective I mentioned.

b. Career Development and Decision-Making Skills--this includes making "undecided" a positive term, since it usually has a negative connotation, assessing the compatibility of a student's goals with abilities, motiviations and other interests, investigating alternative career paths, and developing a decision-making strategy. This effort helps meet objectives 2, 3, and 5.

c. Communication Skills--this includes such items as developing credibility and confidence as an advisor through establishing ground rules for working together, identifying nonverbal communications like posture, gestures, and eye contact, facilitating communication through "action statements" made for reaction (not Yes or No), confronting students when you think they are wrong, and making appropriate referrals. This meets objective 2.

d. Co-curricular Activities--this is an attempt to involve students in experiential learning programs, student government, residence halls, tutoring, etc., so as to enhance their curricular goals. This is probably the most overlooked area of potential student development through advising, and serves to meet objective number 5.

e. An Environmental Perspective--by this I mean understanding the total student; the advisor must develop an adaptability for advising minority students, returning women, the exceptionally talented, older students, the handicapped, as well as the "traditional" college student. This understanding serves to meet objective 3.

f. A Developmental Perspective--this is an integration and synthesis of all the previous modules through identification of the student's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical status and fostering growth in them. It accomplishes the fifth objective.

Hopefully through all of these efforts the fourth objective of advisor satisfaction is achieved. If any of you wish a more detailed explanation of these training efforts and techniques, feel free to write me for them; they are contained in a chapter

I wrote for the American College Testing Program.

3. Evaluation of faculty advisors--this is another area which has been sorely neglected on any formal basis. Just as we evaluate teaching, research, and service we should systematically evaluate advising. It's really not so hard, although there may be a little resistance at first. Some of the criteria for evaluation might include advisor knowledge of policies and procedures, availability, demonstrated interest and understanding of students, and the number of advising problems that are reduced. The evaluators should include students, peers (other advisors), yourselves as Deans and Directors, and oneself as an advisor. The methods for evaluation might include questionnaires, interviews, and the simple counting of such things as numbers of scheduled appointments, referrals, graduation errors, enrollment data, and the like.

And now for perhaps the most difficult aspect of faculty advising:

4. Compensation or Reward--no matter how much we philosophize or theorize, all we have to do is go back to our Introductory Psychology textbooks to learn that behavior changes with rewards and punishments. If we want good faculty advisors, we must reward them; otherwise we must continue our random approach to finding (or developing) good advisors. Again, you are the persons who can make the decisions, or at least vocalize the commitment, to reward good advising.

Remember the trade-offs I mentioned in talking about selection? Well, here are some of the ones I had in mind:

a. Released time from teaching, committee assignments, or other administrative duties, which must be assumed by the non-advising faculty. In this way you have not only "maximized the use of faculty advisors," but also the rest of the faculty as well. Those who want to perform and are better at certain functions (teaching, advising, administration, research) are involved more deeply in those.

b. Credit as independent study teaching for advising because it really is teaching when done in the comprehensive context I have tried to describe.

c. Overload pay or an honorarium, which may not be possible or even desirable since some faculty

would advise for pay, but this is not to say they would do it any better.

Beyond these very real rewards, still others might be suggested that are simple and cheap, yet can be very effective. At minimum a simple letter of appreciation from the Dean can at least bolster morale by acknowledging a job well done. Of course, not all faculty should receive such letters. In this way you are acknowledging advising as an important function and perhaps creating a desire for others to do the job well. Some places now give "Advisor of the Year" awards, which cost no more than the "Teacher of the Year" awards; others run articles and photos in the campus newspaper publicizing their good advising efforts, and one of my favorites is to provide a luncheon for a select group of advisors. This serves two functions--a "thank you" gesture, and I always plan for a "working" luncheon so that some of the problems, programs, and future plans are discussed. In this way you've built in a kind of training effort, and Deans, Vice-Presidents, or even Presidents are likely to find funds to sponsor such activities.

Thus far I have talked exclusively about the role of faculty advisors. I would, however, now like to change that emphasis a little by mentioning some of the other personnel and delivery systems that still serve to "maximize the use of faculty advisors." These personnel and delivery systems are best described in a model I have developed and continually try to work toward. I call it the "4 x 4" model,[5] and it appears as a journal article in the Winter 1977 issue of the NASPA Journal. I doubt that many of you read student personnel journals so that is the Journal of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. This is what the model looks like.

As one proceeds down the vertical axis of the model various functions or levels of advising, and the personnel responsible for them, are identified. The first level of advising is what I call the primary level. This is described in what I talked about in meeting objective #1. This is the information-giving function that advisors perform with respect to registration procedures, graduation requirements, and perhaps specific course selection. All too often, however, this is as far as advising goes--many times because that is all there is time for. But I maintain that the faculty member's time and expertise is worth more than this, so I would utilize students to perform at this

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[5] Thomas J. Grites, "Student Development Through Academic Advising: A 4 x 4 Model," NASPA Journal, Winter 1977, pp. 33-37.

level. Student "peer" advising programs are tried and proven around the country. Such students are highly motivated, well trained and usually lowly paid for this service, and the effects are generally quite positive. I might also add that your secretarial staffs should not be overlooked for this level of advising. They can answer many routine questions, which leaves the faculty member's time more free to perform at his/her level of advising, which is what I call the professional level.

At this level faculty members reserve the authority to advise in the areas of graduate school requirements, selection of graduate and professional schools, choice of electives in order to enhance one's required curriculum, the rationale for such requirements in the curriculum, the choice of that major in the first place, and career development, especially with alternative careers, within their own disciplines. Students, secretaries, nor other staff persons can know and understand these aspects of advising better than the faculty.

The next level of advising is the personal level. By this I mean what we would normally view as the counseling function. That's really what it is, and it should remain with counselors. One of the biggest mistakes people have made in attempting to improve their advising programs is to try to make therapists out of faculty and peer advisors. To me this is a misuse of campus resources. This is not to say that faculty can ignore the student's psychological adjustment. On the contrary, personal, social, and emotional adjustment problems may affect or result from academic matters; therefore, advisors should possess certain recognition and referral skills that will facilitate the student's total development. These skills are the ones I mentioned in the training aspect for advisors.

The last level is similar to what I've discussed in the training aspect of co-curricular activities, and I've termed it programmatic. This level can be performed by any and all of the personnel mentioned previously. The important point is that students (and advisors) become more aware of various programs and activities on and around the campus that can lend to a more enriched curriculum, practical experiences, and maybe even new employment potential.

Now let's turn to the horizontal axis of the model. I happen to believe that academic advising begins with the student's first contact with the institution and continues for an indefinite period of time. I have displayed this belief in the model, and I'll try to explain the developmental stages that advising takes over this period of time.

The first stage is called the preview stage. This begins with that first contact and could be in writing, on the phone,

or in-person. In any case someone knowledgeable about your specific curricular programs should be involved at this early stage. Admissions personnel do an admirable job of providing admission criteria and general information, but they usually lack details and specifics of individual programs. Such contacts might include "welcome" letters from the Dean, faculty attendance at "college nights," "career days," and special interest club meetings in secondary schools, and pre-advising programs in nearby community colleges. In these latter ways the prospective student meets someone with whom he/she is likely to meet again, when enrolled, and a positive advising relationship has already begun.

The next stage occurs once the student has enrolled. In the planning stage the advisor, faculty or otherwise, discusses a variety of topics which I have identified through the four levels of advising. Orientation Programs and "Freshman Seminar" courses serve well to get students started on the right foot, but somewhere along the line the responsibility for further educational planning must be assumed elsewhere. This is not to say that faculty advisors should be hand-holders or mollycoddlers that lead students through the institution for four years. I am emphatic, especially when talking to groups of students, in my belief that students must learn to accept responsibility and the resultant consequences as a part of their college experience. The advisor is there as a resource when needed.

The next stage I call the process stage, and it very often occurs simultaneously with the planning stage. Let me explain how. In this stage the advisor monitors, evaluates and discusses the student's progress in what had been previously planned. Unless the student actually performs the planned functions and activities, advising has had little significance. The advisor reviews the student's progress toward fulfilling degree requirements, academic excellence, and performance and participation in supplemental learning activities. In a typical advising session the advisor would review the student's current progress and plan for the next steps in achieving his/her educational goals.

And finally, the postview stage exists, whether the students left the institution via graduation, transfer, withdrawal, dismissal, or simply didn't enroll once they were admitted. Follow-up contact with these students can provide information about institutional characteristics, curricular offerings, available services, or quality of instruction. With such information certain programmatic, administrative or fiscal changes may be suggested, and this kind of contact can also be used for advising about re-admission or changes in the curriculum. It makes the student feel a sense of contribution rather than a mere recipient. This effort can effectively help to recycle the developmental process as a recruiting function for the "preview" stage.

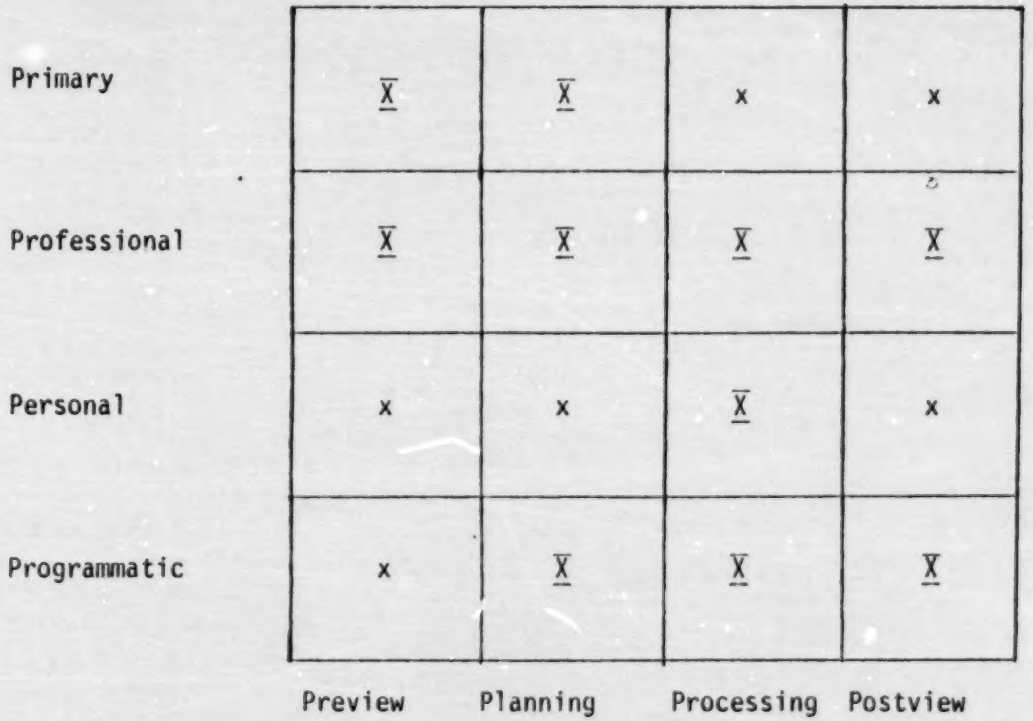
And so we're back to square 1.

Although I said I would present this model to show the ways in which those other than faculty can be utilized in the total advising process, you will note where I have indicated on the diagram that the "professional" advising role, fulfilled only by faculty, serves an essential function in all stages of this model. And although I support peer advising, self-advising, professional staff advising, centralized advising centers, and computer-assisted advising, the faculty advisor cannot be replaced. What can be replaced are some of the archaic ways we utilize our faculty advisors.

Well, these are the kinds of things I would suggest you look at when reviewing your own faculty advising program for the future--objectives, commitment, selection, training, evaluation, rewards, and the use of other campus personnel and resources. When you've done this kind of analysis and made some decisions based on that analysis, then your advising program might become a model for your institution, and I'd like to think a "snowballing" effect will occur so that eventually the advising process assumes its long overdue place of recognition in American higher education. Thank you for your attention, and I will now be glad to answer questions or further comment about any of these or other aspects of advising you'd like to discuss.

Figure 1

The 4 X 4 Model for Student Development



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